United Nations A/AC.198/2009/4

General Assembly

Distr.: General
23 February 2009

Original: English

Committee on Information
Thirty-first session
4-15 May 2009

Activities of the Department of Public Information: outreach services

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

In the course of the past year, the outreach services subprogramme of the Department of Public Information has enhanced and diversified the range of its programmes, products and services for Member States, civil society, youth and the general public. Doing so with fresh energy and purpose, it has taken advantage of the possibilities and proven performance inherent in traditional methods of outreach, as well as the potential of newer means, including the spontaneity and agility of electronic communication.

The present report, prepared in response to General Assembly resolution 63/100 B, summarizes the outreach services of the Department from July 2008 to February 2009, including those aimed at students, teachers and civil society. The report also summarizes progress towards multilingualism and looks at the impact of the Capital Master Plan on the Department's outreach services. The report includes an annex, which presents a progress report on the Department's proposal for a news magazine, "UN Affairs".

09-24748 (E) 170309

I. Introduction

1. In its resolution 63/100 B, the General Assembly took note of the reports of the Secretary-General on the activities of the Department of Public Information submitted for consideration by the Committee on Information at its thirtieth session (A/AC.198/2008/2 and A/AC.198/2008/3), and requested the Secretary-General to continue reporting to the Committee on the activities of the Department.

2. In the same resolution, the General Assembly called on the Department to provide specific information on a number of its activities. The Bureau of the Committee on Information, which met in November 2008, advised the Department to present the requested information in three parts, in accordance with the three subprogrammes of the Department: strategic communications services, news services and outreach services. The present report, submitted for the consideration of the Committee at its thirty-first session, addresses the activities of the outreach subprogramme and includes such areas as new outreach initiatives, educational activities, visitors' services and library services. In separate sections, the report looks at progress towards multilingualism and the impact of the Capital Master Plan on the Department's outreach efforts. The report also includes an annex, which presents a progress report on the Department's proposal for a new journal, "UN Affairs".

II. A mission to engage and inform the public

3. In its resolution 63/100 B, the General Assembly stressed "that the primary mission of the Department of Public Information is to provide, through its outreach activities, accurate, impartial, comprehensive, timely and relevant information to the public on the tasks and responsibilities of the United Nations in order to strengthen international support for the activities of the Organization with the greatest transparency". The mission of the Outreach Division of the Department, which is responsible for the outreach services subprogramme, is to engage and educate people and their communities worldwide to encourage support for the ideals and activities of the United Nations.

4. In the course of the past year, the Department has enhanced and diversified the range of its programmes, products and services for Member States, civil society, youth and the general public. Doing so with fresh energy and purpose, it has taken advantage of the possibilities and proven performance inherent in traditional methods of outreach, as well as the potential of newer means, including the spontaneity and agility of electronic communication. These have allowed its mission of reaching out to be complemented by the capacity to listen to, and learn from, varied constituencies in the larger interests of the Organization, its purposes and its principles.

5. This ability to respond and to receive has been invigorated by a new structure in the Outreach Division, with a clear focus on projects and objectives that are global, coherent, sustainable and that command impact. They involve working across occupational sectors and identifying viable partners, within and outside the Organization. This focus is reflected in a number of new initiatives which have been launched by the Department in the second half of 2008.

III. New outreach initiatives

6. On United Nations Day 2008, the Department launched "UN4U", where individual speakers took the Organization's story to an estimated 3,500 students in 21 New York City public high schools in the Bronx, Brooklyn, Manhattan, Queens and Staten Island. This model — of proactively reaching out to and visiting interested institutions, rather than awaiting their request for a talk or briefing — has been shared with information centres worldwide for a similar effort in 2009 and beyond. For visitors to United Nations Headquarters, a redesigned tour route, which wraps around the General Assembly Hall, integrates a range of new thematic exhibits. Access to complimentary tour tickets has been simplified, now allowing eligible United Nations staff, personnel of permanent missions to the United Nations and retirees to take a no-cost guided tour and extending to staff members and mission personnel a 20-per cent discount for their guests.

7. As of 16 October 2008, the Guided Tour operation began shifting to a full-time staff of 28 guides, now classified as Public Information Assistants with better contractual benefits than had been provided under the earlier "Agreement on Occasional Employment" contracts. The changes in the contracts for the guiding staff were requested by them, and implemented after agreement was reached between the Office of Human Resources Management, staff representatives and Department of Public Information management.

8. Approximately 2,000 visitors to Headquarters on 9 and 10 October 2008 had the opportunity to participate in the first UN Book Days, which was opened by the Secretary-General. Thirty agencies showcased their publications and other materials. The event, including presentations by United Nations departments and entities, became a true forum for librarians, academia, teachers, students, delegates, businessmen and the public at large. Based on its success, the event is scheduled to be held annually, with the venue rotating between New York and Geneva.

9. The Department initiated a new collaboration with one of the Organization's earliest partners, Rotary International, which was present at the San Francisco Conference in 1945. Working with Rotary's local chapters, the Department has sent speakers into the field, reaching over 3,000 Rotarians between March and December 2008.

10. In collaboration with the Strategic Communications Division, a global text-messaging campaign and website for the 2008 commemoration of the International Day of Peace were launched in September 2008. The Txt4Peace website facilitated the gathering of messages of peace via text or short message service (SMS) messaging to be presented to the General Assembly. A number of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) globally supported and participated in the project, which included the facility to send and receive messages through the website from and to anywhere in the world. The campaign was accompanied by links from specially created pages in social networking sites such as Facebook, MySpace and Twitter.

11. Txt4Peace is also a key feature on a redesigned UN Works website, which also portrays the efforts of celebrities to communicate the work the United Nations is doing, and can do, in the field. To further the achievement of common goals of promoting peace and raising awareness of critical global issues, a Creative Community Outreach Initiative has been launched. Building on successful

collaborations such as *The Interpreter* and *Che*, this initiative will provide film, new media, television and documentary producers around the world with access to information about the work of the United Nations and its priority issues, as well as offer logistical advice and assistance.

12. The Dag Hammarskjöld Library has developed a new research tool, the United Nations Member States Wiki, to organize and provide access to a range of information about the United Nations activities of Member States, including dates of membership, sponsorship of draft resolutions and major statements. This Wiki will also be accessible to the wider public, in particular scholars and students, who will also benefit from a special project, launched in 2008, to convert into digital formats the Library's collection of the United Nations Oral History Project interviews with eminent persons from the early years of the Organization.

13. In this drive to make information on the Organization easier and swifter to access, the online version of the *Yearbook of the United Nations* was launched in October 2008. The new website — unyearbook.un.org — provides free public access to all the printed volumes of the *Yearbook* collection, detailing the work and achievements of the United Nations system over the first 60 years of its existence (1946-2005). New useful features will be added, as will later volumes as they become available. The new site incorporates a search function, allowing users to locate any *Yearbook* reference using key words, phrases or document symbols, by year or range of years. Search results can be displayed in plain text or as a printable PDF file. It is expected that the new website will not only serve as a strong research tool, but it will also help users better understand global issues as they affect them today.

14. A new programme — the Academic Impact — will be formally launched during the course of 2009. This initiative will create a global network of universities worldwide that will make commitments to promote the Organization's priorities, undertake programmes in their support and contribute ideas to their fulfilment. The initiative has received expressions of support and interest from a number of organizations, universities and institutions worldwide. These efforts targeted to the research and learning communities reflect the particular focus of the Department's outreach services on youth, detailed in section IV of the present report, which will also broaden the Organization's outreach to the public, increasing awareness of, and support for, the United Nations throughout the world.

15. Vital to that mission are the Department of Public Information/NGO Weekly Briefings at Headquarters which have introduced new elements to enhance interactivity and relevance. A series entitled "May I ask a Question..." will feature high-level United Nations officials in conversation with the non-governmental audience. As will be detailed later in the present report, the 2008 DPI-NGO Conference was held for the first time at a venue outside United Nations Headquarters. For the first time, the Conference had a host country organizing partner, the Government of France, which bore some of the costs of the Conference convened in Paris. The 2009 DPI/NGO Conference will be held in Mexico and the overarching theme will be disarmament and international peace.

IV. Reaching young audiences

16. The organization of the first annual Global Model UN Conference is a new and dynamic element in the outreach programme to youth being undertaken by the Department, with partners including the World Federation of United Nations Associations, the United Nations Foundation, the United Nations Fund for International Partnerships and United Nations information centres. It will be held in Geneva, from 5 to 7 August 2009, on the theme "The Millennium Development Goals: lifting the bottom billion out of poverty". The Government of Switzerland has offered a financial contribution to the organization of the Conference.

17. The planning process for the Global Model UN Conference was initiated in September 2008 with the creation of five intradepartmental planning committees and outside partners and stakeholders. Some of the committees are led by youth with experience in organizing Model UN conferences. In order to launch the programme, the Department developed a comprehensive database of Model UN conferences and programmes worldwide over the summer months. A media launch was organized in September and a webpage (www.un.org/gmun) was launched.

18. The Global Model UN Conference promises to be the most extensive outreach to youth ever undertaken by the Department of Public Information. Invitations have been extended to 323 university-level Model UN programmes and very enthusiastic responses have been received from students around the world. Apart from the educational and promotional value, the Conference offers an opportunity to highlight best practices of Model UN experiences on the organization and work of the General Assembly and other United Nations deliberative bodies system-wide. It is also expected to encourage the organization of Model UN conferences in countries where they do not currently exist.

19. The Department continues to engage young people worldwide on important issues on the United Nations agenda through its programme of international student conferences and videoconferences organized around United Nations observances. The Global Teaching and Learning Project, of which the United Nations CyberSchoolBus website is an integral part, remains the Department's premier vehicle for outreach to children and youth as well as teachers who develop curriculum on the United Nations. It is currently accessed from more than 200 countries and territories with an estimated 3.5 million page views per year. The Project will launch two new lesson plans on small arms in partnership with the Office for Disarmament Affairs.

V. Building upon, and furthering, successes

20. For the twenty-eighth consecutive year, the Department invited a group of young journalists from developing countries to New York to participate in the Reham Al-Farra Memorial Journalists' Fellowship Programme. Three print (including "new" media), three radio and two television journalists participated in briefings at Headquarters, visits to media organizations, and meetings at the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, and in the Atlanta, Georgia, Headquarters of CNN. The Department has found the six-week time frame to be optimum to accommodate this schedule of activities. Countries selected for the 2008 programme were Brazil, Gabon, Israel, Jordan, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Somalia, South Africa and

Turkey. Since its inception in 1981, some 346 journalists from 160 countries have participated in the Programme. In recent years the number of participants has been reduced due to increased costs.

21. The pivotal element in the Reham Al-Farra Fellowship Programme is the opportunity for participants to meet, and converse with, diverse representatives of the United Nations system, in line with the continuing effort to make officials available for briefings.

22. In 2008, the Speaker's Bureau, in response to requests from the public, arranged 803 in-house briefings, 26 videoconferences, and 65 outside speaking engagements, reaching over 55,000 individuals. Almost a million visitors each year view the rotating roster of public exhibitions curated and installed by the Department in the Headquarters Visitors' Lobby. In 2008, 34 exhibits were displayed in partnership with a number of sponsors — from both within and outside the Organization. Exhibit themes included climate change, the environment, health, HIV/AIDS, indigenous rights, mine awareness, human rights, the question of Palestine, peacekeeping, youth, development, tolerance and world peace.

23. The last elements were particularly reflected in two other programmes. The Department coordinated the Stand Up and Take Action against Poverty and for the Millennium Development Goals campaign at Headquarters on 17 October and the annual United Nations Day Concert on 24 October 2008, sponsored by the Permanent Mission of China, with a performance by Messenger of Peace Yo Yo Ma and his Silk Road Project Ensemble. The Messengers of Peace Programme promotes United Nations issues and programmes through the special efforts of celebrity advocates. The Department provides the Messengers of Peace with updates on issues of importance to the Organization and encourages them to engage in outreach on these issues.

24. The Department also chairs a semi-annual policy guidance meeting for United Nations system focal points for Goodwill Ambassadors, in the interests of consistency among the various programmes, and to share information and best practices. At present, the 10 Messengers of Peace designated by the Secretary-General are joined in advocacy efforts by 170 Goodwill Ambassadors named by individual programmes, funds and agencies. The Department aims to ensure that these appointments are limited to individuals who not only are highly distinguished in their fields but also have demonstrated their commitment to supporting the work of the United Nations and its family of organizations.

25. This commitment is also readily evident among many of the NGOs affiliated with the Department. Building upon this, an active campaign to diversify the geographic representation of the NGOs in association with the Department is under way. As the Annual DPI/NGO Conference is taken on the road, there will be a new focus in mobilizing NGOs from the region where the Conference will be held. The network of United Nations information centres will be playing a key role in being proactive in inviting NGOs in their region to associate with the Department. In this vein, the Department also works to identify NGOs that no longer meet the criteria of association. A list of NGOs that have not communicated with the Department for at least three years has been sent to the relevant Department of Public Information field offices. An online survey has also been sent to gather feedback on these NGOs, their financial and ethical standing as well as their capacity to disseminate and

generate information relevant to the Organization. The NGOs that no longer meet the responsibilities which they accepted upon affiliation will be disassociated.

26. The Department responded to 24,901 communications from the public, which included 5,011 letters, 4,042 e-mails, 1,213 telephone calls, and 3,072 walk-in visitors, as well as 10,658 petitions on various subjects. The general information website (www.un.org/geninfo) registered 4,294,209 page views in the six official languages. Another electronic resource of information, and debate, are the online editions of the *UN Chronicle*. The Department has also published an updated edition of *Sixty Ways the United Nations Makes a Difference*, which is being distributed worldwide and is being translated in all the United Nations official languages, as well as in non-official languages to extend its reach. Work also continues on finalizing the sixtieth edition of the *Yearbook* covering activities in 2006.

27. Graphic designers have played a significant part in branding and creating the artwork for many of the Organization's outreach programme. The highly successful UN4U design helped to promote United Nations Day activities around the world in many languages. In collaboration with other departments involved in the publication process, the Graphic Design Unit also self-published a step-by-step guide that explains how to design, print and publish in the United Nations system, which has been a useful guide to clients. This ready access to process and procedures is intended to support the Department's commitment to ensure coherence, identity and quality in the "look and feel" of print products produced in and by the Organization.

28. *UN Development Business*, a self-financing print and online procurement publication, issued almost 9,500 procurement notices during 2008, working with 16 entities (including the World Bank and other multilateral development banks, the United Nations and government agencies) and reaching over 1,000 subscribers in over 100 countries. Over the past half year, a number of efficiencies have been introduced into the operation, most significant of which is a new database for the editing of procurement information that is scheduled to be implemented early 2009. As part of a wider outreach campaign, all United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) country offices, as well as Permanent Missions to the United Nations, have been approached to support promoting *United Nations Development Business* through the building of key partnerships.

29. Significant progress has been made in the project to outsource sales warehousing and customer service activities with the completion of a comprehensive bidding process and the selection of a vendor. The move of the warehouse is now scheduled to take place in the second quarter of 2009, thus avoiding much of the disruption that was anticipated from the Capital Master Plan. Unified warehouse operations will not only reduce operating costs but will help to direct resources to enhance promotional and outreach marketing activities.

30. In an effort to provide more effective outreach for the sale of United Nations publications, a three-tier pricing system has been endorsed by the United Nations Publications Board, at the initiative of the Department, which chairs the Board. The new policy addresses differences in purchasing capacity around the world by instituting special "developing country" and "least developed country" prices. As a result, each sales item produced by the United Nations has a three-tier pricing — list price, developing country price and the least developed country price. Developing country prices are calculated by applying a 50-per cent discount to regular list prices and the least developed country prices by applying a 75-per cent discount. The

policy went into effect on 1 July 2008 and is expected to further increase worldwide dissemination of United Nations publications.

31. In line with this refocus on the needs of less and least developed countries, the marketing programme for the New York and Geneva sales offices has been unified. Also, in an effort to increase its outreach activities in the developing countries, the Department has broadened its participation in the professional book fairs taking place in Africa, Asia and Latin America and the Caribbean. For example, in 2009, it will for the first time take part in book fairs and related events in Cameroon, Ghana, Oman, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Trinidad and Tobago and the United Arab Emirates, among others.

32. 2008 saw the continuation of a multifaceted marketing programme. The e-commerce driven website received more than 30,000 unique visitors per month, while approximately 200,000 publication catalogues, 30,000 flyers and 30,000 bookmarks were disseminated under the direct marketing plan. The United Nations Bookshop has continued to play its important outreach role by targeting professional and general audiences through its e-commerce driven website and at its retail outlet conducting almost 80,000 transactions and organizing and supporting 35 special events at United Nations Headquarters. These events, and "meet the author" programmes at the Bookshop, also offer necessary and important opportunities for staff members to explore ideas and learn about activities outside their immediate areas of professional responsibility.

33. Significant progress has also been made in furthering the One United Nations initiative through internal communications designed for the Secretariat. In October, iSeek, the Secretariat Intranet, reached an important milestone in its development by bringing on board Beirut, the last of eight large-staff duty stations to have iSeek as the Intranet page appearing on computer screens when opening the web browser. The early December completion of the iSeek Global Access Fast Forward Initiative added iSeek access to more than 100 new sites around the world. All 44 Field Offices of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, the 63 United Nations information centre sites, 7 subregional offices of the five regional commissions and 3 Regional Centres for Peace and Disarmament (Africa, Asia and the Pacific, and Latin America and the Caribbean) all now have iSeek access.

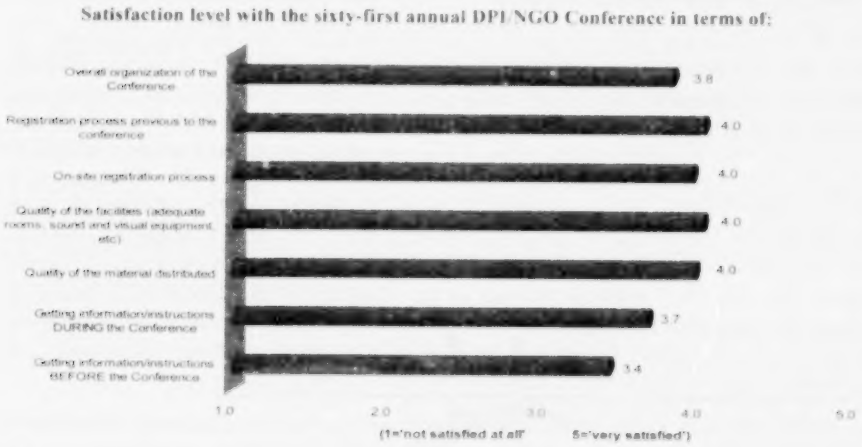
34. The Department has also begun an institutional memory project in cooperation with the Department of Management. The project will look into ways of preserving institutional memory using a Wiki and will capture the processes involved in the various daily tasks undertaken by staff members Secretariat-wide. Two knowledge management events were organized in 2008, including a two-day forum, organized with the office of the Chief Information Technology Officer, on the theme "Learning to manage with knowledge", attended by more than 20 knowledge management specialists from within the United Nations system. The alerting tool, UN Pulse, is used as a tool by United Nations information centres and depository libraries and others interested in the Organization to track important new reports.

VI. Activities relating to Human Rights[1]

35. Following an active campaign to diversify the geographic representation of NGOs it associates with the Department of Public Information, the sixty-first Annual DPI/NGO Conference entitled "Reaffirming Human Rights for All: The Universal Declaration at 60" took place for the first time outside New York, at United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) Headquarters, in Paris from 5 to 9 September 2008. Over 1,100 participants, representing 65 countries from 461 NGOs affiliated with the Department, the Economic and Social Council, UNESCO and working with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, joined in the 2008 Conference to share knowledge and experience on how best to promote and contribute to the advancement of human rights around the world. The website was developed in both English and French and was updated from both Paris and New York during the Conference.

36. Participation was key to the success of the Conference, which offered manifold opportunities for dialogue and exchange (see the figure below on the participants' level of satisfaction with the Conference). This was largely ensured by involving grass-roots organizations during the planning process. Five round tables and accompanying "breakout" sessions allowed for more spirited and less structured conversations and an open sharing of best practices, hopes and opportunities.

Level of satisfaction with the sixty-first DPI/NGO Conference



37. The Secretary-General and the President of the sixty-third session of the General Assembly welcomed more than 700 participants to United Nations Headquarters to discuss the theme "Peace and human rights" on the International Day of Peace 2008. The programme brought together students who gathered at peacekeeping missions in Afghanistan, Liberia and the Sudan (by video link) as well

[1] For the human rights-related activities carried out by the Department's strategic communications services, please see the report of the Secretary-General (A/AC.198/2009/2).

as 45 schools and organizations at Headquarters, bringing a total of 728 participants. United Nations Messengers of Peace Michael Douglas, Jane Goodall, Midori Goto and Elie Wiesel took part in activities for the International Day of Peace at Headquarters, including the student conference.

38. A new Messenger of Peace, Charlize Theron, was designated in support of the Secretary-General's campaign to end violence against women. The Department organized the Human Rights Day Concert on 15 December 2008, sponsored by the Permanent Mission of Spain, and featuring Messenger of Peace Daniel Barenboim with members of the West-Eastern Divan Orchestra. Earlier that month, the 2008 United Nations Student Conference on Human Rights connected 350 students from 19 countries and one territory. On the final day of the Conference, 10 schools and organizations assembled at United Nations Headquarters in New York, while a group of students from Latin America gathered for a parallel conference at the United Nations Information Centre in Mexico City. Both sites were electronically linked to schools in Bahrain, India, and South Africa and New Jersey, United States of America, who participated in the conference via videoconference.

39. The Conference was jointly organized with the United Nations International School, New York, and a number of NGO partners. Students worked together to develop a joint Plan of Action that addresses the challenges posed by climate change from a human rights perspective. The Plan of Action was presented to the President of the General Assembly on the last day of the Conference. The entire event was webcast live. Prior to the Conference, participants conducted their own research on climate change and human rights, participated in a live video chat with the Department's focal point for climate change and shared what they had learned through a web-based forum on the United Nations CyberSchoolBus website.

40. The Department has published a special double issue of the *UN Chronicle* (Issue 2/3, 2008) entitled "*Speaking to Our Common Humanity*", in English and French, with in-depth articles on human rights and the recent emergency in food and commodity prices. Contributors to the double issue included the President of Brazil and the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. The Department's Geneva Sales Office, in collaboration with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, published a richly illustrated book for children and adolescents that comprises all 30 articles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Early source material related to the drafting of the Declaration are now universally available through a new website which makes available the documents of all the meetings held during this process, as well as biographical information on the members of the Drafting Committee.

41. The activities of the Holocaust and the United Nations Outreach Programme have helped to ensure that future generations will learn from the lessons of the Holocaust. The fourth annual observance of the International Day of Commemoration in memory of the victims of the Holocaust was held in January 2009 under the theme "An authentic basis for hope: Holocaust remembrance and education". The solemn ceremony also paid tribute to the veterans of the Second World War who participated in the liberation of the concentration and death camps. In observance of the commemoration, the weekly Department of Public Information/NGO briefing focused on "the Sephardic Jews in Greece: The untold story".

42. The Outreach Programme has forged new partnerships with the Holocaust Education Development Programme of the University of London and the Holocaust Centre in the United Kingdom to make pedagogical tools available to the global network of information centres, in support of their efforts to encourage Holocaust education and remembrance. This initiative of the Department titled the Footprints for Hope Project was designed to bring the field offices and local schools together to involve students aged 13 years and older in the study of the Holocaust and the dangers of hatred and bigotry. To help combat anti-Semitism and Holocaust denial, the outreach programme distributed teaching guidelines that were developed by the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe. In addition, the most recent discussion paper in the outreach programme's series outlines the history of the Jews in Europe during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

43. An exhibit entitled "Deadly Medicine: Creating the Master Race", organized by the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, addressed how the Nazi regime perverted medicine and science in its policies of persecution, murder and genocide. Around the world, United Nations information centres organized a number of commemorative activities. The programme continues to work with survivors to ensure that their stories are heard and heeded as a warning of the consequences of discrimination. Two panel discussions were held in the second half of 2008; one highlighted the link between the founding principles of the United Nations and its mandated activities in the areas of Holocaust remembrance and genocide prevention and the other marked the seventieth anniversary of the Kristallnacht pogrom.

44. A variety of Holocaust-related activities were also organized around the world:

- **Africa**: Students in Africa took part in an educational videoconference with United Nations Information Centres in Antananarivo, Brazzaville, Bujumbura, Dakar, Lomé, Yaoundé; UNESCO; le Memorial de la Shoah; the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda in Kigali; and the Holocaust and the United Nations Outreach Programme.

- **Americas**: The United Nations Information Centre in Mexico City, in collaboration with B'nai B'rith and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, presented an exhibit of drawings and photos of women and children in the Holocaust at the Jewish Cultural Center.

- **Asia and the Pacific**: The United Nations Information Centre in Tokyo profiled *Hana's Suitcase*, the children's book by Karen Levine about Hana Brady, who perished in Auschwitz at age 13.

- **Eastern Europe**: The Department of Public Information component of the United Nations Office in Azerbaijan arranged for the subtitles of the film, "*Into the Arms of Strangers: Stories of the Kindertransport*", to be produced in Azeri for a screening with the Ministry of Culture and Tourism.

- **Western Europe**: The United Nations Information Service at Geneva mounted two exhibits and held a memorial ceremony in partnership with the Permanent Mission of Israel to the United Nations Office at Geneva, which emphasized Holocaust education and the importance of involving youth in remembrance activities.

45. In 2009, the Department plans to amplify the number and visibility of commemorative activities paying tribute to the victims of slavery and the transatlantic slave trade. Under the theme "Breaking the silence, beating the drum", the Department will spearhead a series of events around the world, including a concert in the General Assembly Hall and an international student conference/videoconference, in cooperation with UNESCO, to mark the observance of the International Day of Remembrance of the Victims of Slavery and the Transatlantic Slave Trade on 25 March 2009.

VII. Library services

46. The Dag Hammarskjöld Library provides information services to delegates, the Secretariat and other official groups as well as to the wider public through Internet products, publications and other means of communication. Its activities to preserve and index United Nations documentation ensure that needed information tools are accessible for the current and future work of the United Nations. Research support and training of a mobile Secretariat, and staff of Permanent Missions to the United Nations in the use of new information tools and resources remain a high priority, involving the main library staff and three specialized collections covering the cartographic, legal and economic and social areas.

47. In the last quarter of 2008, a successful programme in General Assembly documentation was attended by over 50 Permanent Mission staff. The overall training programmes were updated in response to client needs and courses have been redesigned to enable attendees to identify, evaluate and make efficient use of the high-quality resources that the Library maintains or to which it subscribes. Additionally, customized programmes and coaching sessions are regularly planned and organized to address the management of the overwhelming amount of information accessible in a rapidly changing, and increasingly electronic, work environment.

Box 1
Comments from training participants

- Comments from Mission staff:

  "Extremely useful session! I would definitely recommend colleagues to take this training."

  "Thank you so much, you made my work so much easier!"

  "Would absolutely suggest this course for the people who just came to the UN."

- Comments from Secretariat staff:

  "Course was useful and relevant to work."

  "Excellent session, full of information and with a very knowledgeable and helpful trainer."

48. The Department of Public Information serves as the secretariat for the United Nations System Electronic Information Acquisition Consortium, which allows individual agencies to select titles from a constantly growing list of suggested electronic resources. The Department, as a coordinator, liaises with the vendors and handles invoices and technical issues on behalf of the agencies. The Consortium has 58 members (in addition to 15 United Nations departments and several peacekeeping operations) in over 45 countries globally, providing services valued at approximately $2.18 million, with the majority being accessible by unlimited users via Internet protocol authentication.

49. Progress in the retrospective digitization of United Nations documents continues. In 2008, some 16,000 documents (98,000 pages) were scanned, put through rigorous quality control and loaded to the Official Document System (ODS). Noteworthy is the completion of the digitization of the main series of Security Council documents from 1946 through 1993 in the English, French and Spanish languages in the first quarter of 2009; the completion of the project for Arabic, Chinese and Russian languages is expected by the end of 2009.

50. For the period from July 2008 to February 2009, approximately 1,400 voting records for resolutions which were adopted by the General Assembly and the Security Council during their current sessions and retrospectively during earlier sessions have been recorded in an organized manner in the database for ease of search and reference purposes. The voting records, together with the links to the full text of resolutions, are constantly updated and made available on the United Nations website.

51. During the same period, bibliographic metadata have been created and assigned to more than 20,000 documents and publications of the United Nations and its agencies, and the contents of these documents analysed professionally for ease of search and retrieval. The created metadata and the subject analysis of these documents are the core of the United Nations documents index, ODS and the United Nations Bibliographic Information System (UNBISnet). In addition to creating and assigning bibliographic metadata to current documents and publications, retrospective content analysis and indexing of documents of the earlier sessions of the Security Council and the General Assembly continues. As of 1 January 2009, a total of 813,175 bibliographic metadata are recorded in UNBISnet.

52. A study of the feasibility of using the United Nations Standard Enterprise Content Management system to manage the metadata has demonstrated its benefits to all concerned. A lack of financial resources has, however, precluded a project of migrating bibliographic metadata into the system. However, the Library continues to publish indexes to proceedings for the General Assembly, the Security Council, and the Economic and Social Council. As the guide to the documentation and proceedings of the three main organs, their commissions, committees and ad hoc committees, the publications include subject indexes to the discussion and action taken on meetings, result of voting, and indexes to speeches made before the forum in question during the particular session. In addition to printed publications, the indexes are made available on the United Nations website.

53. Promotion of operational and fiscal efficiency makes cooperation between the libraries of the United Nations a priority. The United Nations libraries continue to work together on issues such as common indexing policies, digitization operations and United Nations information centres. The Dag Hammarskjöld Library also

cooperates with the libraries of other United Nations System Libraries through the libraries' inter-agency Knowledge Sharing and Information Management Meeting.

54. Developing the thesaurus and authority records in all six official languages remains an important activity in the context of information processing and acquisitions. For the period from July 2008 to February 2009, 2,770 new authority records have been established and 1,769 revised; 30 new thesaurus terms and geographic names have been added to the database and 154 amendments to terms have been made; and more than 10 organizations requested for information on and distribution of electronic and paper version of the thesaurus.

55. Cataloguing of commercial, governmental, intergovernmental publications on subjects of permanent as well as current interest to the Organization, Permanent Missions to the United Nations and the Secretariat, regardless of format, primarily in the six official languages have been made in the bibliographical databases. Some 1,449 monographs and serials were catalogued and 218 website addresses of online version of publications have been added in the databases.

56. The programme of depository libraries coordinates the United Nations relationship with over 400 libraries in Member States. Through regional training, the programme promotes closer cooperation between them and United Nations information centres. In 2008, such programmes were held in Mexico, for libraries in Central America, the Russian Federation, for depository libraries in member States of the Commonwealth of Independent States, and in India. A training programme for libraries in English-speaking southern Africa is to be held in Pretoria in 2009. In 2009, the Division will work with all depository libraries to ensure their optimal use of technological and electronic resources, conserving time, expenditure and paper, strengthen their capacity and increase partnerships among themselves. Working closely with local United Nations offices, depository libraries will become partners in promoting public awareness of the work of the Organization and focusing attention on issues of importance to the international community.

Box 2

Dual-purpose Library website services

Library website (http://www.un.org/depts/dhl) services continue to be repurposed by others, providing a multiplier effect for the work of the Dag Hammarskjöld Library:

- Up-to-date information on resolutions from the Dag Hammarskjöld Library United Nations Documentation Research Guide are incorporated into the General Assembly web pages, as are pre-set searches on agenda information.
- Pre-set UNBISnet searches are incorporated into the web pages of the Sixth Committee of the General Assembly, the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and others to provide ongoing up-to-date information about United Nations documents.

VIII. Multilingualism[2]

57. In response to the request of the General Assembly in its resolution 61/266, the Secretary-General has appointed the Under-Secretary-General for Communications and Public Information as Coordinator for multilingualism. The report of the Secretary-General on multilingualism (A/63/338), presented for consideration by the General Assembly at its sixty-third session, provides a detailed update on activities undertaken by the Department of Public Information on the issue.

58. The launch of the International Year of Languages in February 2008 presented an additional opportunity for the Department's outreach services to involve several of its core constituencies and to reach out to a broad audience on the subject of multilingualism. In partnership with UNESCO, a global seminar entitled, "Languages matter! Linguistic diversity, globalization and development", was held on 17 and 18 December, for which United Nations Messenger of Peace Paulo Coelho recorded a message.

59. The Department continues to offer a variety of its products and services in a number of languages. Guided tours are a very popular means of introducing the United Nations to the general public. Various duty stations have developed guided tours on their premises. In New York, visitors can at present take tours in Arabic, English, French, German, Hebrew, Korean, Italian, Japanese, Mandarin, Portuguese, Russian, Spanish and Swedish. Print and electronic editions of *UN Today* and *Sixty Ways the UN Makes a Difference* are also available in several languages, and the number increases as new translations are completed by United Nations information centres and external partners.

IX. Impact of the Capital Master Plan[3]

60. The Department is making provisions to ensure that the level of services that it provides is maintained throughout the period of the Capital Master Plan. While all areas of the Department's outreach services will be impacted to some degree, many are expected to be able to continue to operate without undue disruption. The Capital Master Plan relocation plan calls for the relocation of Department staff in the Dag Hammarskjöld Library building to other locations. This has been particularly challenging for the Library itself, which houses approximately 48,000 linear feet (9 miles) of collections, including the archive collection of United Nations documents since 1946. While some Library staff will remain on site during the first phase of renovations, half of the staff has already moved to space in the Daily News building in late 2008. A small branch will be made operational in the temporary North Lawn Conference Building to provide information services to delegations. These and other services to clients will be disrupted as little as possible thanks to the pre-planning efforts of Library staff.

61. Activities geared to the visiting public will remain based in the General Assembly building through 2011: exhibits in the Visitors' Lobby; guided tours,

[2] For the multilingual activities of the network of United Nations information centres, please see the report of the Secretary-General (A/AC.198/2009/2).

[3] For information about the impact of the Capital Master Plan on the Department's news services, please see the report of the Secretary-General (A/AC.198/2009/3).

group briefings in conference rooms in the temporary North Lawn Conference Building; and access to the Public Inquiries counter in the lower concourse of the Visitors' Lobby. There will be some disruption in the operations, however; large groups, for example, will no longer be able to hold their annual United Nations-related outreach programmes at Headquarters and on-site briefings may have to be restructured as videoconference events or outside speaking engagements.

62. Contingent on developments relating to the Capital Master Plan, and the availability of space for tour groups to congregate, it is hoped to resume audio and guided tours as well as briefings in the renovated Conference Building in 2011, with spaces reserved in the temporary North Lawn Conference Building for exhibits, although the Department will increasingly focus on designing travelling exhibits.

63. Virtually all areas of the Department's outreach services will be impacted by the availability of conference rooms. In the case of NGO Relations, the Division is scheduling its annual NGO Conference at various international locations for the duration of the Capital Master Plan. This move, while avoiding possible disruption, also brings the positive benefit of expanding the reach of the Conference to new regions. While efforts are under way to find a venue for the regular NGO briefings, communications workshops and the orientation programme at Headquarters, NGOs will have access to a resource centre throughout the Capital Master Plan period.

64. An important activity for the Department's outreach services is its four annual student conferences which cater to groups of between 170 and 1,000 students, the largest of which, with some 1,000 students, takes place in September on the International Day of Peace. If conference facilities are not available for these events, it will be a challenge to organize them elsewhere as they are heavily dependent on videoconference services and accommodation for hundreds of students on site in New York, for whom coming to United Nations Headquarters is a highlight.

65. The United Nations Bookshop will continue to operate in its current location throughout the initial stages of the Capital Master Plan and at the end of 2011 move to the North Lawn Conference Building. In addition to serving visitors, the shop will look to ways in which it can continue to sell to staff and conference attendees through special sales events, marketing programmes and satellite operations. Potential disruption to the broader publications sales programme will be mitigated by the move of the sales warehouse to an external contractor in the second quarter of 2009.

X. Conclusion

66. **In the words of Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, "the foundation of all the UN's work is accountability. We need to change the UN's culture. We must become faster, more flexible, and more effective — more modern." The core of the Department's outreach services is to be an instrument of this accountability to the peoples of the world who have, through their direct participation and questioning, helped define the Organization's aspirations and activities as assuredly as the Member States who ensure their institutional representation and provide legislative direction.**

67. **As the Department plans its programmes and partnerships in the year ahead, conscious of both the limitations and opportunities inherent in the**

process of the Capital Master Plan, four key elements will continue to inform its mission: strategy — to ensure that its activities correspond to the priorities of the Organization; impact — to ensure that each of its activities reaches out to a maximum number of people; creativity — to effectively capture and engage audiences in a competitive environment; and diversity — to enlarge and ensure as broad a participation and globalization of the Department's activities and initiatives.

Annex

"UN Affairs": A progress report

1. In paragraph 30 in the report of the Committee on Information,[a] the Committee discussed the proposal, made by the Under-Secretary-General for Communications and Public Information, "for the *UN Chronicle* to evolve into a journal entitled 'UN Affairs'". Delegations agreed that the Department of Public Information provide them with detailed information on the project, including the concept and a pilot copy of the journal, so as to discuss the possibility of its approval during the sixty-third session of the General Assembly, under the item entitled "Questions relating to information".

2. An informal meeting of the Committee on Information was held on 16 September 2008 to consider the pilot copy of "UN Affairs", which was made available to members in response to a request by the Committee for a more detailed accounting of the progress made towards effecting the Department's plans to have the *UN Chronicle* magazine evolve into "UN Affairs".

3. Following the informal meeting, the General Assembly's Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee) at its 14th meeting on 22 October 2008, asked the Department to continue with the *UN Chronicle* until a decision is taken on "UN Affairs" (see A/C.4/63/SR.14). Pursuant to that, the Department has published a special double issue of the *UN Chronicle* (Issue 2/3, 2008) entitled, "Speaking to a Common Humanity", in English and French, with two clusters of in-depth articles on human rights and on the ongoing emergency in food and fuel prices. The Department also intends to place online existing translations in Arabic, Chinese, Russian and Spanish of the entire four issues of 2007 and Issue 1 of 2008 of the *UN Chronicle* once the new website is finalized by the Department working in conjunction with the Information Technology Services Division of the Department of Management.

4. At the 14th meeting of its 2008 session, the Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee) also requested the Department, inter alia, to take into account parity of languages, editorial policy, potential qualitative gains and other improvements intended by the change from *UN Chronicle* to "UN Affairs". It urged the Department that, while considering these aspects, emphasis be placed on cost-effective measures and the present budgetary constraints. It also welcomed any other alternative in line with the mandate of the Department for the consideration of Member States (see A/C.4/63/SR.14).

5. The *UN Chronicle* for some years now has not sufficiently reached out to the audience it seeks, especially in enhancing its educational outreach in line with the wishes of the Committee on Information. The total paid distribution of the *UN Chronicle* in English and French has remained just over 3,000 copies per issue. Another six thousand copies are distributed free or at a nominal rate to, inter alia, Member States, libraries, academic and other institutions. The subscription rate has also fallen slightly in line with similar publications.

6. Students and teachers of subjects relevant to the United Nations have often argued with the Department for a different publication that places a greater

[a] *Official Records of the General Assembly, Supplement No. 21* (A/63/21).

emphasis on a comprehensive and more substantive in-depth analysis of a theme and that offered an authoritative voice to scholars, students and practitioners. The need for such a publication is also prompted by the imperative to more closely involve audiences that have a role in shaping news and policy.

7. If the Department is to continue publishing an influential magazine as the flagship publication of the Organization, it needs to adapt it as a new brand that offers a solid opportunity to explore authoritative viewpoints relevant to making informed decisions. It would be the objective of the proposed journal, "UN Affairs", to build upon the core audience of the *UN Chronicle* and involve that readership more closely in the Department's public communications strategies as effective multipliers of the Organization's messages. In this regard, "UN Affairs" would make every effort to reach out to potential authors from around the world, especially from developing countries, in order to ensure an equitable regional and gender balance in the choice of contributors for the journal.

8. The contributors as well as the primary audience of "UN Affairs" are meant to come from those branches of society that shape, assess, evaluate, recommend and implement policy. They are the government leaders, academic experts, civil servants and civil society leaders who have devoted years to a particular issue. In sum, "UN Affairs" would work to promote people's understanding of the work of the Organization and strive to add real input to expert debate on global problems and workable solutions. The aim is also that "UN Affairs" is cited as a source material for assessing, evaluating and framing substantive policies at the United Nations, within Governments, among civil society groups and in institutions of higher learning as well.

9. In respect to reaching out to the maximum number of people around the world through "UN Affairs", the Department is exploring different avenues for achieving language parity. It has been approaching universities, publishers and think tanks, several of which have already expressed their interest, in principle, in publishing the journal in the other official languages of the United Nations. The Department envisages a model arrangement where it would grant an institution the right to translate, publish and distribute the language edition of "UN Affairs" at no expense to the United Nations. The Department is also exploring a separate option of selecting, translating and putting up online 50 per cent of the content of a possible "UN Affairs", within existing resources.

10. The Department affirms that a change from *UN Chronicle* to "UN Affairs" would be in line with the commitment made at the above-mentioned meeting of the Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee) by the Under-Secretary-General for Communications and Public Information, who stated that in light of the current budgetary situation, it was his intention not to ask for additional resources.